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Resume

This project deals with Debussy's life and analysis of his most important piano works. Various essential facts and information about his life and his personality are included. In the project, Debussy is being described as a composer while his passion of nature, music, his loves and his experiences are explored. Furthermore, the important moments of his life through which he encountered excellent musicians from the romantic period as well as composers of the 20th century are presented.

In the first part, there is a description regarding the history of music, art and culture in Europe until the time when the term "impressionism" makes its appearance.

The second part of this project comprises a biography of the composer while his life as a father, lover and artist are explored.

The third part deals with his achievements as a composer and the development of his career in the city of Paris. What follows is a presentation of the most important works that he composed while the main features of his music, his way of thinking and composing and his preference towards particular composers explorers are discussed.

The fifth part provides an analysis of Debussy's most important works for orchestra and the sixth provides an analysis of some of his works for piano.

Finally, brief, helpful examples and ways through which one can teach and perform the music of Debussy are explained. Furthermore, several phrases and important letters which Debussy wrote in some of his beloved people are included.

Resume

Rozhodl jsem se psát diplomovou práci o Claudu Debussym. Chtěl jsem zmínit nejzávažnější fakta z jeho života, představit ho jako skladatele, odkrýt jeho vášeň k hudbě, přírodě, ženám, popsat jeho setkání s významnými hudebníky stejně tak jako z hudby romantismu tak s představiteli hudby 20. století.

V první kapitole sleduji hlavní směry dějin hudby a výtvarného umění do objevení impresionismu.

Druhá kapitola je věnována dětství a mládí skladatele.

Třetí kapitola pokračuje v Debussyho životopise a vydává svědectví o letech, která strávil v Paříži.

Čtvrtá kapitola zahrnuje obecnou charakteristiku Debussyho děl, hovoří o způsobu jeho přemýšlení, tvoření a preferencích některých skladatelů.

Pátá kapitola přináší analýsy vybraných děl, které psal Debussy především pro orchestr (Faunovo odpledne, Nocturna, Pelleas a Melisande, Moře aj.)

Šestá kapitola je věnována hudbě psané pro klavír a přináší některé analýzy těchto děl.

Sedmá kapitola, sloužící jako určitý typ shrnutí, hovoří o metodách, kterými je vhodné učit a hrát Debussyho

Introduction:

Although the concept of music has undergone radical changes during the last decades, it is a common fact that dominant musical figures in the history of music are still influencing its development with their work. One of the most evolutionary and influential musicians who set the foundations in the realm of music is regarded to be Claude Debussy. Widely known for his beautiful, special and elegant music, Debussy is defined by various experts in the field, as a composer with a unique talent whose work inspired numerous musicians. He composed magnificent pieces for piano and orchestra through which he expresses a music full of passion and colors. Considered to be one of the most famous composers of the 20th century who gained great followers and supporters for his work, he achieved to add a new meaning in the way music is perceived. Furthermore, he managed to create a new structure of the piano music by using whole tone scales and pentatonic adding new elements as well with the use of the pedal, giving in this way more depth and distinctive feelings to his piano pieces. Despite the fact that his music was defined as “impressionistic“, Debussy himself rejected this description precisely because he wanted to be regarded as a symbolist composer.

One of the main concerns of this project is going to be the investigation and analysis of Debussy's life and work. In particular, the discussion will scrutinize the life of the musician while it will explore his first and later artistic steps in the sectors of music. In addition, a number of his piano works will be explored and examined in detail. Nonetheless, the sources of his inspiration as well as the way through which he turned this inspiration into music will be analyzed. It is essential to mention that information regarding the life and work of Debussy was gathered from books such as “Debussy” by Edward Lockspeiser, “The history of music” by Karl Nef, “The enjoy of music” by Joseph Machlis and Kristine Forney, from the series “Composer's world” by Wendy Thompson as well as from “The listener's history of music” by Percy A.Scholes.

Chapter 1: CULTURE IN EUROPE DURING THE 19TH- 20TH CENTURY:

At the end of the 19th century various changes took place regarding the issue of culture in Europe. As soon as the European culture began to experience major changes, people started to confront things in a different point of view. This fact becomes obvious in fields such as literature, painting, architecture and music. As far as music is concerned, numerous conservatoires started to be created in various European cities. As a consequence, the subject of music started to flourish and hence a variety of orchestras started to rise. Some of the most well known Orchestras of that period are considered to be the Gewandlhaus Orchester in Leipzig, the Opera house in Berlin, the Philharmonic Orchestra of Vienna, the Conservatoire of Orchestra in Paris, the orchestra of London, Manchester and the Concertgebouw Orkest of Amsterdam. In addition to these, professional conductors like Arthur Nikisch, Hans von Bulow and Hans Richter made their first appearance.

During the first half of the 19th century, numerous composers created various masterpieces regarding music while some of them were interpreters at the same time. Some of the most important figures of this period concerning piano music are Liszt and Chopin, Clara Schumann, Hans von Bulow, Anton Rubinstein and Ignacy Paderewski. Regarding violin music, some of the most important artists are Joseph Joachim, Pablo de Sarasate and Eugen Ysaye. While in vocal music it is essential the work of Lily Lehman who was friend of Brahms, Julius Stockhausen, the soprano singer Adeline Patti and the famous tenor Enrico Caruso who is defined as one of the most essential vocal singers of the 20th century.

Nevertheless, the 19th century is regarded as the period through which a number of different European nations such as the Czech, Polish, Italian, English and French, began to develop their own distinctive culture. In addition, countries such as Austria, Germany, Hungary and Russia are some of the European countries that faced radical changes regarding the issue of culture. It is important the fact that the changes that occurred in relation to the European culture affected the work and style of the European composers and vice versa.

It is in the light of these changes that Romantic music started to be established. It is described as an evolutionary music that expresses deep feelings and emotions. The main features of Romantic music are precisely the feelings and imagination that it expresses while the element of fantasy seems that it served as a base for the inspiration of various composers regarding piano pieces and orchestral works. Hence, a miscellany of novel romantic music forms was the result of this period. A great example of Romantic music is depicted in the work of Frederick Chopin who wrote piano pieces like nocturnes, fantasies and ballades. Through his work, Chopin managed to transmit to the audience the feeling and imagination that he himself was experiencing while creating these masterpieces. Another example of Romantic music is found in the work of the composer namely Hector Berlioz, whose imagination becomes obvious and recognizable in his orchestral pieces as well as in the work of

Franz Schubert; a composer that wrote both pieces and songs following an easy melody. Nonetheless, Robert Schumann who also composed both pieces and songs, Mendelsson, Liszt, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Dvorak and Franck are some of the figures that contributed in the development of Romantic music by creating works using their own unique sense of style in music.

The second half of the 19th century was influenced by a new style in opera which is called verismo. Verismo is a style which depicts the issue of life underpinned by an exaggerated passion since the artists involved are performing roles through which they reveal the concept of life often in a brutal way. A distinctive feature of that opera style is the description of poor and common people's lives. One of the operas that has elements of verismo is the Carmen by Georges Bizet and the La Traviata by Giuseppe Verdi while the most well-known composer regarding this kind of opera style is considered to be Giacomo Puccini. whose operas such as Bohema (1869), Tosca (1900), Madame Butterfly (1904), Manon, Turandot (1924) – unfinished, brought him great recognition and success.

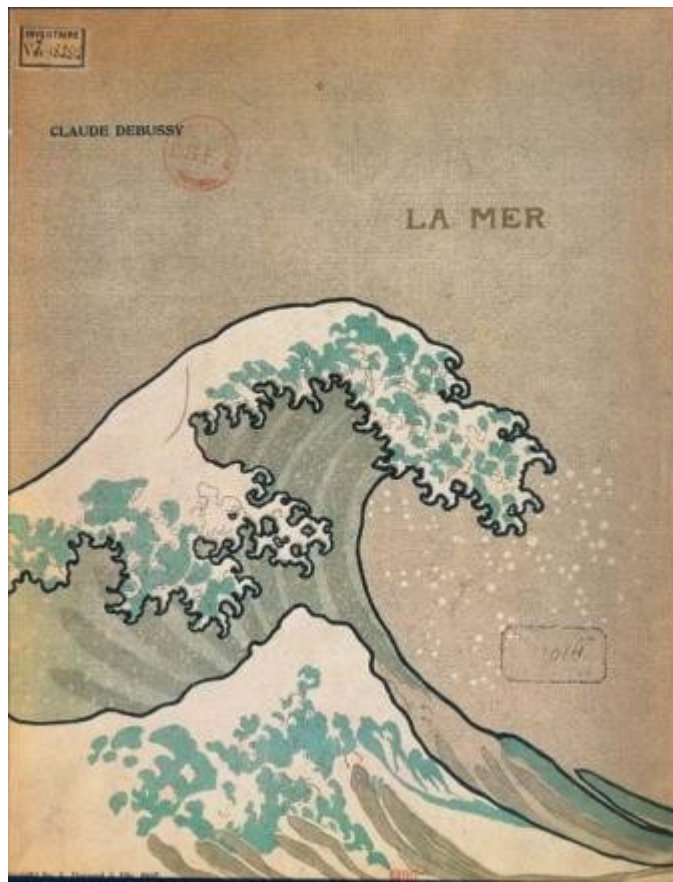
During this period, the term “impressionism” made its first appearance. Its origins are traced in France and it forms a new and free way of thinking as well as a high expression of emotions. The term primarily derived from paintings and it was first used to describe the well known painting Sunrise of Claude Monet. It was actually a term used by the French art critic Louis Leroy in 1874. Leroy considered this term as the most appropriate one to describe the loose, undefined and "unfinished" style that Monet and several other artists depicted to their work. The movement of impressionism lasted for approximately two decades, from the late 1860s to the 1880s.

When a work is called Impressionistic is defined by a unique style but without the strict traditional rules of subject matters, technique, and composition. In painting, impressionism is a free, unusual, extraordinary style through which the everyday life is expressed based on nature and people. Examples of impressionism are landscapes and the uniforms that people wear for the purposes of their work in gardens, parks and seaside (workmen). A great role in the establishment of impressionism played the city of Paris. Due to the fact that the city started to reconstruct into a modern place, it became a subject of inspiration for the impressionist artists. Women working on the streets of Paris with the latest fashions fascinated painters while the fact that Paris seemed to have new streets and modern architecture and modes of transportation as well as scenic riversides and seacoast resorts attracted the attention of many artists for the creation of their works. Furthermore, impressionistic painters drew ordinary objects as well aiming to reveal the effect of light and shadow on their appearance. Some of the most well known painters of the Impressionistic period are E. Manet, C. Monet, C. Pissarro, A. Sisley, E. Degas and P-A. Renoir. It is important to mention that apart from Paris, countries such as Japan and China as well as other exotic places became the main inspiration for several artists of that period.

Regarding the concept of music, impressionism can be described as an important musical style. Specifically, in impressionism music, the harmonies are not necessary to be solved. The use of all tone scale is evident in various impressionism pieces; a fact that originated mostly from Asia. In the impressionism music, the ninth chords which means that in a chord we have the space of 9th between the lowest and the highest tone - is obvious. Through these new elements, the impressionism music

makes use of the major and minor scale systems, without actually being placed in any of that. It is above the tonic line, creating unusual impressions which are similar with the paintings of impressionism founded in the work of painters like C. Monet (for instance: sunrise). In the orchestra, during the impressionistic period the instruments are not used in the same way that were used to be in the romantic period. That means that every instrument intermingles with another instrument like for instance the oboe in the clarinet and flute. A new world of musical expression is born with impressionist movement. The colors in the orchestra seemed to be very cleverly united resulting in a more delicate and totally different music from the romantic one. Moreover, with impressionism music the audience is able to feel the nature such as the colors of the sea and the movement of the wind. Nevertheless, the rhythm appears to be an exotic one and the facts of the classic-romantic period occur in a new musical style which flows with a naïve and unclear pulse. In addition, the musical form of the impressionistic period is different from the austro-german traditional forms. While in the austro-german, the symphony and the concert were present, the impressionistic musicians prefer the short forms-preludes, nocturnes and arabesques. These forms appear to reveal a deeply lyrical meaning or impressionistic paintings. Some examples of Debussy's music are the pieces "Clair de lune", "Gardens in the rain", "reverie". Overall, it seems that the definition of the impressionism can be described as the "after" of the romantic trends.

Different forms of fine art seem to experience a change and thus to become more interesting by the end of the 19th century. To be more precise, after the French Revolution and the European Revolutions, radical changes took place around the world regarding the concept of art. Symbolist poets and critics such as the French poets C. Baudelaire and A. Rimbaud, P. Verlaine and S. Mallarmé inspired from nature contributed in this change with their work influencing various composers of the 20th century. Novel music institutes, symphonic orchestras, vocal choirs and organized music schools made their appearance. This fact highlights the so call ***democratization of music production***. It is precisely in that political and artistic atmosphere that the talent of Claude Debussy emerged.



Chapter 2: CLAUDE DEBUSSY:EARLY YEARS

Claude Debussy was born in 22 August 1862 in Saint-Germain, a small city near Paris. He came from a poor family and he was the son of Manuel and Victorine Debussy. His father owned a shop, where he sold china and crockery and his mother was a seamstress. Debussy's talent regarding piano was obvious from his childhood. He actually took his first piano lessons in Cannes when he was only 7 years old under the teaching of the Italian violist Cerutti. At the age of 10, he entered the Paris conservatoire where he spent eleven years. There, he studied piano, musical history, music theory, composition, harmony, organ and solfeggio. He became lifelong friend with the pianist Isidor Philipp who was also a student of the Paris Conservatory. Due to this fact, after Debussy's death, a number of piano players asked for Philipp's advice regarding the way that they should perform Debussy's music work. Debussy himself was an excellent interpreter of piano. He played in various concerts with his main repertoire being sonata movements of Beethoven, Schumann and Weber, Chopin's ballade no.2, a movement from the piano concerto no.1 and the Allegro de concert which was a little known piece but rather an advanced one, with difficult techniques that was originally intended to be the opening of the third piano concerto.

Debussy was a rather good student. The first class in which he was enrolled was the solfeggio; a subject that this school of conservatoire is famous for. His master Lavignac first introduced him to Wagner's music by playing to him one winter evening, the overture to Tanhauser. Debussy studied under the guidelines of Lavignac for four years and during each annual exam he was awarded with the third, then the second and finally the first price. Regarding the piano class, his teacher was Marmontel. According to Marmontel, Debussy was not among the best pupils of his class. He assumed that Debussy was not particularly fond of piano, but that he liked

music in general. In 1877 Debussy won the second prize performing the first movement of Schumann's G minor Sonata, and his parents were still able to hope for the establishment of his career as a virtuoso. However, the following years revealed to be rather disappointed for Debussy's career since he did not receive any award. In Marmontel's class Debussy played works of Chopin, Schumann as well as various works of Stephen Heller and C.V. Alkan. The teacher of his harmony class was Emile Durand. During the four years that Debussy spent in this class, he created his first known compositions. These compositions are found on some songs that accompany Theodore de Banville's poems while his pieces entitled *Madrid*, *princesse des Espagnes* and *Ballade a la lune* are almost certainly lost.

An important fact that affected Debussy's career is that during the summers 1880, of 1881 and 1882, he accompanied the wealthy patroness Nadezhda von Meck who traveled with her family in Europe and Russia. Debussy had played various 4 hands piano with Madame von Meck. He was teaching her children music and he was performing some private concerts with some of her musician friends. When Debussy met Nadezhda von Meck, she was fifty years old and a multimillionaire. Her husband had died in 1876, leaving her with eleven children. During the year that she lost her husband, she developed a strange passion for the personality of Tchaikovsky sending him love-letters over a period of sixteen years. She was an accomplished pianist, cultured and widely popular. She knew the Rubinstein well and several of her children had taken lessons from Liszt. Von Meck was so excited by Debussy's talent who was only eighteen years old the period of their first encounter. Debussy traveled with her and with some of her children in 1880 from Interlaken through the south of France to Arcachon. At the beginning of September of the same year Debussy was in Florence with the family of Nadezhda von Meck. One of the letters of Von Meck to Tchaikovsky was about a little piece that Debussy composed in that period entitled as "*Danse bohémienne*".

In Florence, Debussy was required to play in the household trio with the violinist Pachulsky and the cellist P. Danilchenko. Debussy wrote one song in 1882 called *Rondeau* set on words of Alfred de Musset and he dedicated it to W. Pachulski who was married to Julia. Maximilian de Meck remembers that Debussy fell in love with his sister Sophie and asked her to marry him. However, since Sophie was only sixteen years old she rejected his proposal. On the 29th of September of that year, Madame von Meck informs Tchaikovsky that her "little Frenchman" - as she liked to call him - finished a Trio that he was writing that time. This trio was dedicated in affectionate terms to his harmony master. Emile Durand. His early works seem to be arranged according to his hostess's requests (the Spanish, Italian and Russian dances from Tchaikovsky's ballet "*The Swan Lake*"). Debussy appreciated so much the agreeable duties of his post and the opportunities to work at the Villa Oppenheim. He arrived in Russia early in July 1881. From the middle of July it is revealed from several sources that he was in Moscow with Madame von Meck. Until the end of September Debussy spent his time with her. Later Debussy moved to Paris, although it is not clear when he left Russia. In one of von Meck's letter, she wrote that Debussy wanted the score of overture of *Romeo and Juliet* because he wanted to study it and he already had the score of the *Maid of Orleans*. Mme Von Meck gave it to him highlighting in her letter to him that she did not only miss him but she missed the music that he played to her as well.

Raymond Bonheur, a student of the Paris Conservatoire argued that Debussy brought back from Russia an old opera of Rimsky-Korsakov and some songs of Borodin. A song written by Debussy in 1880 in Florence, shows an acquaintance with Borodin. Other important works of this period are *La belle au bois dormant* and *Le Triomphe de Bacchus*, both written between 1880 and 1883. Furthermore, it is argued by one writer of the Biography of Debussy-M. Laloy that he was familiarised with the Tsiganky songs in the Moscow cabarets.

According to Jean Lepine, in 1880, Madame von Meck introduced Debussy to Wagner while being in Venice. As the author argued, Debussy met Borodin in Moscow. During his stay in Paris, Debussy had great disagreements with Cesar Frank while studying at the Paris Conservatoire and due to this fact he decided to change class and enrolled into the composition class of Ernest Guiraud. Apart from this fact, another reason that made Debussy to choose this particular class was that as he himself admitted he liked his way of teaching, his personal ideas, mindedness and tolerance.

Debussy as a person was very talented and he could create music that was pleasant for the ears and thus his teachers were amazed with his work. Regarding the years between 1881 and 1884 Debussy spent them for the preparation of the Grand Prix de Rome. At the same time, he was the accompanist to a choral society, *La Concordia*. He had also a meeting with a woman namely Marie Vasnier who later became his accompanist. Vasnier was a beautiful, young singer who was married with an older man. She and her husband lived in a flat in the Rue de Constantinople in Paris and they had another house as well at Ville d'Avray where Debussy had stayed and he had the opportunity to learn information regarding music provided to him by Madame Vasnier. She suggested to him some books to read and this fact enable Debussy to get the appropriate knowledge in matters concerning literature and art. From Theodore de Banville and Paul Bourget who were his favorite poets of his earlier years, he progressed to Verlaine and Mallarme. Debussy, inspired by Verlaine's poems, he composed songs which he sang and performed them with Madame Vasnier. He wrote a *Rondel Chinois* from contemporary manuscripts and a *Nocturne* and *Scherzo* for piano and violin which he played at a concert of the violinist Maurice Thieberg in 1882 "with the gracious aid of Mme Vasnier and Monsieur Achille de Bussy". All these pieces except from the *Fetes galantes* were lost. It was written that Debussy had fall in love with Madame Vasnier. Despite the fact that Madame Vasnier's great affection towards Debussy is revealed through the letters that she was sending him, it not clear whether he actually was her lover.

In 1884, from the 10th to the 16th of May, Debussy was admitted and participated in the preliminary competition for the Prix de Rome. He took the fourth place with *Le Printemps*, for mixed choir and orchestra to words by Jules Barbier. One year later, he admitted for the final competition for the Prix de Rome. Debussy received the first prize with *L'Enfant prodigue*, a lyrical piece for the stage on a libretto by Édouard Guinand, sang by Rose Caron, Ernest Van Dyck and Alexandre Taskin. On the 28th of January, Debussy went to Rome to study at the Villa Medici, with Paul Vidal, Gabriel Pierne and George Marty, under the supervision of Louis Cabat. Through the letters that he sending to Madame Vasnier, Debussy reveals that he was unhappy during his studies at the Villa Medici. In particular, in one of his letters, he described to her the unpleasant weather, the dirty room that he was living in, and the unfriendly

people that surrounded him while he argued that he the company of Vasniers. In another letter he sent to Madame Vasnier he stated:

“Here I am in this abominable Villa. I can tell you that my first impressions are not very favourable. It’s awful weather-rainy and windy. There was no need to come to Rome to have the same weather as in Paris, especially for any one with such a grudge against Rome as I have.

My friends came to meet me at Monte Rotondo, where the six of us slept in one dirty little room. If only you knew how changed they are! None of their good-hearted friendly ways to Pais. They’re stiff and impressed with their own importance-too much Prix de Rome about them.

In the evening when I arrived at the Villa I played my cantata, which was well received by some, but not by the musicians. I don’t mind. This artistic atmosphere and camaraderie that we are told about seem to me very exaggerated. With one or two exceptions ,it is difficult to talk to the people here, and when I hear their ordinary conversation I cannot help thinking of the fine talks we used to have which opened my mind to so many things. Then the people here are so very egoistic. I’ve heard the musicians demolishing each other Marty and Pierne against Vidal, Pierne and Vidal against Mart, and so on.

Ah! When I got back to my enormous room, where you have to walk a league from one piece of furniture to another, I felt so lonely that I cried!

I’m so used to your friendship and to your asking me about my work. I shall never forget all you have done for me and the place I had in your family. I shall do all I can to prove to you that I am not ungrateful So please don’t forget me, for I feel I am going to need you. I’ve tried to work but I can’t. You know how much I love music and how much this state of mind annoys me. This is not the life for me. Their happiness isn’t mine. It’s not pride that makes me hate this life. I can’t get used to it. I have no feeling for it and I haven’t the necessary indifference.

Yes, I fear that I shall have to return to Paris earlier than you think. It may appear silly, but what I there to do? I don’t want to make you cross and I should be very sorry to try your friendship. But whatever you think, you can’t accuse me of lacking courage. I’m rather unwell-Rome again-my beastly heart doesn’t seem to be working properly. I rack my brain to work, but nothing comes of it except a fever which knocks me down completely .I was so pleased to get your letter, and if I m not asking too much, I know how little time you have, send me a long letter to remind me of the pleasant talks we used to have”.

Your affectionately,

Your fevoted

Ach.Debussy.

Give my best regards to Madame Vasnier. How is Marguerite? Is she still working at my songs? I like Marguerite very much and I would like her to become an accomplished musician. That would please you and me too, for at least I should have done something worth while. A kiss for her and also for that silly little Maurice.(Book- Debussy” by Edward Lockspeiser)

It becomes clear from his letter, that he was desperate. Despite this fact, Debussy kept working on some works he was required to send periodically to Paris. The first of these was Zuleima, a work for chorus and orchestra based on a text from Heine’s Almanzor. As Debussy wrote in a letter of 4th June 1885, he founded the subject “too old and fusty”. As he explained “these great silly verses, which are only great in their

length, bore me, and my music would be stifled by them. Then there's another thing: I don't think I shall ever be able to put music into a strict mould. I'm not speaking of musical form, it's a literary question. I shall always prefer a subject where, somehow, action is sacrificed to feeling. It seems to me that music thus becomes more human and real and one can then discover and refine upon a means of expression". (Book-Debussy by Edward Lockspeiser).

Debussy in the summer of 1885 was invited to spend a short time in Fiumicino at the seaside villa of Count Primoli. Regarding this fact, Debussy stated that "There weren't any people or casinos. I was able to be by myself as much as I wanted, knowing to none and only speaking when I wanted something to eat-which was nuisance enough....i worked I should almost say well". Debussy, in Italy, heard the first performance of Beethoven's second Symphony and the "Emperor" concerto played by Sgambati. (Book-Debussy by Edward Lockspeiser). In addition, while being in Italy, Debussy studied the ninth Symphony and the organ works of Bach. Being in Italy for so long, Debussy had the opportunity to travel to different cities of the country and became acquainted with certain of his older Italian contemporaries. Leoncavallo, whom he knew slightly introduced him to Boito in Milan.

In the meantime Debussy carefully studied the ninth Symphony of Beethoven and the organ works of Bach. Nevertheless, he met Verdi at Sant'Agata with whom had a lunch. According to M. de Ternant, from this meeting it seemed that Verdi was not so interested to discuss about music (This source is from book-Debussy by Edward Lockspeiser in page 27). On the other hand, Franz Liszt was there in Villa Medici as well. Debussy met him at the house of Sgambati. He was pleased from this meeting and Debussy said that he received the greatest musical treatment of his life. He heard him playing the piano in Rome when performing for the last time in that country. Debussy and Vidal played to Liszt Valses romantiques for two pianos by Chabrier. Liszt died the following year.

At the beginning of 1886 Debussy expressed his willingness to leave Rome and moved back to Paris. This is due to the fact that he was disappointed from his life in Rome. He finally returned to Paris but just for a short period of time since Madame Vasnier convinced him that he had important reasons to return to Rome. Back in Rome, Debussy was confronting difficulties regarding his artistic work; he could not compose. However, he achieved to write one scene of *Diane au bois* and the beginning of *Zuileima* while he completed *Printemps*. Debussy never managed to finish the work *Diane au bois* whereas *Zuileima* has been lost.



Chapter 3:DEBUSSY IN PARIS

In spring of 1887, Debussy returned to Paris. Although he was pleased with his return, his father lost his job and due to this, his parents were in a difficult economic situation. Despite this fact, Debussy enjoyed his life in Paris, admiring the beauty of the city, enjoying to just sit in cafés and listen to the music of artists and writers who expressed through their work concepts such as the art, life, love and politics. During the same year, Debussy along with Vidal, were set off for Vienna in order to meet Brahms. Together they visited the Conservatorium and the graves of Beethoven and Schubert. Brahms himself wished to Debussy all the best for his career. In the following year - 1888 - Debussy became a member of the Societe Nationale de Musique. In addition to this, in January, he composed *Le Balcon* which is the first song in the *Cinq Poemes de Baudelaire*; a manuscript that he offered to his friend Paul Poujaud. The first edition of *Ariettes oubliées* was published in six separate parts, by the widow of Étienne Girod, in boulevard Montmartre. At the same period, he attended to compose piano pieces. His “Arabesques” are two well-known pieces for piano which he wrote using the whole-tone harmonics. With the creation of these two pieces, Debussy introduced to the world of music a light. He used modes and scales based on whole tones, without the semitones so the piece could not be in a definite “tonality” or key. He composed 4 parts *Petite suite* for piano duet which are considered to be important pieces of music.

In August, Debussy traveled to Bayreuth where he heard *Parsifal* and *Die Meistersinger*. At the end of the same year, he completed his third composition from Rome, namely *La Damoiselle Elue* which was based on a poem by D.G Rossetti, and it was written for woman’s voices, solo, choir and orchestra. One year later, during June and July, Debussy discovered the Javanese gamelan and the Annamite theatre, a staged by a company from Saigon . Raymond Bonheur, Paul Dukas and Robert Godet were present as well.

In 1889, Debussy experienced the Universal Exposition in Paris through which groups of people from all over the world where gathered and displayed the best pieces of art, music and culture that defined their countries. It is essential the fact that an exposition from Java, an island in the Malay Archipelago attracted the interest not only of Debussy but of other young musicians as well. The Java exhibit was a model Kampong, or a village, through which all aspects of a common village life were depicted. However, what made special this exhibition was the Java’s gamelan orchestra which is a collection of musical instruments, mostly metallic and with gong- or bell-like sounds. The gamelan plays the traditional music of gamelan, a music that has been transmitted orally from generation to generation. In particular, the youngest age villagers, adopted the conventions as well as the style of gamelan music by osmosis and gradually learn how to play the musical instruments. Gamelan music was described as a unique, powerful and beautiful music that was completely different from what the western audience was exposed to. European musicians spent hours listening to the gamelan, transcribing melodies, and examining the instruments and their tunings. Debussy himself argued that “despite the troubles that civilization has brought, there still are some wonderful people who learn music as easily as one learns to breathe” (Book-Debussy by Edward Lockspeiser). Through this argument, Debussy highlighted the fact that for those people music was synonymous to the way they learn to sow and harvest crops, prepare a meal, or build a traditional dwelling; it was part of

their everyday life.

Debussy, in some of this work, used several elements of the gamelan music adjusting them in such a way so as to serve his own musical purposes. In order to understand the extent that Debussy was influenced by the gamelan music, it is essential to examine one of his piano works. What follows is an analysis of Debussy's work namely *Pagodes* Debussy through which elements of the gamelan music are clearly present.

Ostinato



As it becomes clear, the figure that Debussy uses here is short and it is repeated several times. In this case, the ostinato is the fast-moving notes in the highest part. The idea of an ostinato is very similar to the gamelan cycle. Debussy, in that piece, used in sections only four notes of the pentatonic scale just like the ones presented in the gamelan while the melody is similar with it. The 3 against 2 rhythms of mm. 21ff and mm. 37ff are used in "Pagodes" and that actually reminds the rhythms and musical style and instruments of the gamelan music. A pedal point is a bass note that is sustained as the harmony changes above it. The use of pedal points is common in all Western Music, but Debussy dared to use it more often and with his pedal points being longer. Using pedal point in this particular way provides a different effect to music and the bass note which is an important note gives the impression of an unchanging harmony.

In the meantime, Debussy was in close contact with the French composer Erik Satie. Satie himself, argued that Debussy was full of Mussorgsky and that this fact comprises one of his main influences. About 1890, Debussy began an opera entitled *Rodrigue et Chimene* which he remained unfinished just like the *Diane au bois*. By the time he returned from Rome, he composed only few works and this fact dissatisfied him. Three of his works "Envois with Zuleima and Printemps were supposed to be in the traditional concert of the works of each holder of the Prix de Rome at the Salle du Conservatoire. However, that concert did not take place. *La Damselle elue* which was a work for orchestra achieved some success later on. Something similar happened with fantasy for piano and orchestra. Debussy's inspirational background in Paris was Wagner's music as well as the music of Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov and Mussorgsky.

The "Cinq Poemes de Baudelaire are five settings of poems from Baudelaire's "Les

fleurs du mal". The first one was completed in 1887 namely as "Les morts des amants". A month later he finished the first poem of the cycle "le balcon" while one year later he composed the "Harmonie du soir" and the "Jet d'eau". Moreover, the following year he composed the "recueillement". It is interesting the fact that the music of these pieces is similar to the music of R.Wagner. It is a common fact that Debussy was fond of the romantic composer whose the compositions were of highly respect. Baudelaire was an avid supporter of Wagner's music and due to this fact, Debussy decided to write the music in the structure of R.Wagner meaning that he used new chromaticism and harmony. Apart from the music of R.Wagner, russians composers affected Debussy at a great extent. Moreover, his songs inspired Stephane Mallarme and prompted her to ask Debussy to collaborate in a theatrical setting of the symbolist text L'Après midi d'un faune. In the year 1891, he wrote the "Ballade" or "Ballade Slave" which he inspired from the music of the Russian composers and "mazurka". Furthermore, he composed "reverie" while in 1893 he used Oriental elements from the Javanese gamelan in the String Quartet. This String Quartet has four movements. This piece is highly sensual and impressionistic. Two of his piano works with an incredible form are the "Arabesques" through which he shows the whole-tone harmonics.

At this stage of his life, Debussy was creating a new musical language. He had new ideas of music and art in general, he loved the poems of French poets and he was moving in a new musical world full of imagination and dreams. In order to compose some piano pieces he used a scale based on whole tones, without the semitones which seems to lead in the creation of pieces of a definite "tonality" or key. Furthermore, the pieces from his famous "petit suite" - "En bateau ,cortege, menuet, and the ballet"- are considered to be of highly importance. These 4 pieces are arranged for piano four hands in which Debussy shows a delicacy and beauty. The "Mazurka" that he composed has the typical trite progression like the arabesques. As it already mentioned, Debussy was influenced by Russia and Russian artists like Rimsky-Korsakov and Borodin. This kind of influence is present in one of his piece called "Ballade" or "ballade slave". There is a Russian extraction in a phrase of that piece. However, in his piece "The Danse" or " Tarantelle styrienne", he presents a piano piece which seems to need an orchestra (the one of Rimsky-Korsakov).

Another composer that Debussy admired was J. S .Bach. Debussy stated that "Bach is the Grail and Wagner is the Klingsor trying to crush the Grail and to take its place" (Book-The listeners history of music by Percy A.Scholes). Debussy was fond of the decorative quality of the melodic element in Bach rather than the masterly counterpoint. Some of the themes Debussy wrote was something like an obvious plain song or Bach-like arabesque quality. One example is from "The Afternoon of a Faun" - the flute theme and later on the Oboe theme. Other interesting compositions that Debussy created were his "Estampes" where his beautiful inspiration based on particular places of the world such as Asia, prompted him to wrote these pieces which have an essential interest of the piano repertoire until today, showing an incredible way of thinking full of colors and nature. One example of these works is the piece "La soiree dans Grenade"(The afternoon in Granade) which is an adorable and famous piece which is regarded as a remarkable work as well. This piece shows the Spanish influence since Debussy was inspired from the rhythm of Habanera.

It is important the fact that the world fair affected Debussy and the realm of art in

general, at a great extent. Debussy loved things that he considered to be beautiful and especially things such as the fragile, exquisitely painted porcelain vases and the delicate Oriental paintings. Art nouveau which means in French new art, raised in that period. It is a movement which is close related to Symbolist literature. One piece that Debussy composed at the time of art nouveau was “La demoiselle elue” (The blessed Damozel) which is based on a poem by the English Pre-Raphaelite artist and poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti and through which he uses swirling arabesques of melody, accompanied by an unusual palette of orchestral tone-color to depict Damozel herself.

At the time of 1890, Paris was well-known as the city of lovers and Debussy met a girl from Normandy called Gabrielle Dupont. Although, she had no work, she was one of the country girls who visited Paris every year, aiming to find an opportunity for job and hence for her carrier. Despite the fact that she was as poor as Debussy, they decided to live together. However, both being in a very tough situation with huge economic problems made them tired. They lived in a small place a room in the district of Montmartre. The atmosphere at that time in 1890, in the place of Montmartre, can be described as unique and beautiful. The place was full of artists, poets and musicians who appreciated sitting in some little cafes and brasseries around the Place de Tertre, drinking and enjoying themselves chatting. Numerous nightclubs and music halls existed around the Place Pigalle. The very famous Moulin Rouge(Red Windmill) opened in Pigalle and people of all social classes visited that place. Among them was Debussy and Gaby who were visiting Moulin Rouge in order to enjoy the show from the artists. On the other hand, the Circus provided a variety of acts, including the English clown Footitt and his Moorish companion Chocolat while the Chat Noir(Black Cat) offered a spectacular entertainment to the audience. In the light of this atmosphere, Debussy was ready to create a new sound-world: the sounds of nature.

He had various inspirations like writing down the sound of the wind and capturing the rustle of leaves, using new elements in his music. He was significantly inspired by Harlequins and their Columbines masked in pale silks, playing instruments like mandolins and guitars or dancing plaintive sarabands. His famous piece “Clair de Lune” from the suite bergamasque was one piece in which Debussy took some ideas from these images. Additionally, he composed songs based on Verlaine’s evocative poetry, such as the first set of Fetes galantes (romantic celebrations) for which he created three songs about love called “softly”, “puppets” and “moonlight”.

During this period, Debussy’s life and career were flourished. He met new people including his friend Erik Satie who greatly admired Debussy and learned from him essential things regarding music, love and art. Ernest Chausson was considered one of his close friends who was regarded as a wealthy and cultured man that entertained at his wonderful house in Paris all the greatest talents of the time. Some of them were the writers Renoir, Manet, Degas. Andre Gide, Mallarme and the musicians Franck and Faure. Debussy and Satie were also invited to his home. Chausson was a student of Cesar Franck and Debussy. The period that Debussy met him, he composed his only string quartet. Probably Chausson was the one that convinced him to write it. This kind of music is considered to be “pure music”. When this work was first performed at the end of 1893 by the Belgian violinist Eugene Ysaye and his colleagues gained a great success. In 1894, Debussy met the singer Therese Rogerat at the house of his friend Chausson and proposed her to marry him. However, their

relationship did not last since Debussy was not pleased enough. As a result, the break up of this relationship displeased Chausson. In the meantime, Debussy met Pierre Louys who was eight years younger than him. He shared common interests with Louys such as music, literature and women. Debussy wrote music on a set of three songs based on poems by Louys, entitled *Chansons de Bilitis* (songs of Bilitis) that refers to an imaginary young girl in ancient Greece who recalls her meeting with her lover. With his music, Debussy gave passion to the poems of his dear friend Louys. During that time, Debussy gave some piano lessons a fact that he actually hated. Although Debussy raised some money by giving piano lessons were not enough for his expenses. Based on this issue, his close friends Louys and the publisher Georges Hartmann were willingly giving him an annual income of 6000 francs. During this particular period of his life, Debussy was living with Gaby. However, their relationship came to an end and in 1898 he married to a pretty and attractive model namely Rosalie Texier or Lilly as Debussy liked to call her. However, the vast economic problems on the one hand and an illness that Texier had to tolerate on the other resulted in a lack of interest towards her husband.

In 1903, he met Emma Bardac. At that time, Debussy was forty years old and very tired of living in poverty. Nonetheless, it is important the fact that *Pelleas et Melisande* was recognised one year after the first performance and this made Debussy famous in the sectors of music. Bardac was the wife of a wealthy Jewish banker and a well-known society hostess. She was a mature singer who had already been the mistress of the composer Gabriel Faure, who dedicated a song-cycle to her and wrote as well the beautiful “Dolly” suite for her daughter. She was at the same age with Debussy and she was regarded as an educated and intelligent person. Debussy fell in love with her and one year later they spent time together in the island of Jersey. Debussy wrote a letter to his new publisher and friend, Jacques Durand telling him how nice he felt there; he felt peace and he was able to work. He had an inspiration to compose the “isle of joy” which is considered to be a famous piece in nowadays. Furthermore, he had an inspiration from a famous eighteenth-century painting by Watteau which shows people who were sailing for the mythical “island of love”, Kythera. In autumn, Debussy and Bardac returned to Paris. It is said that Texier tried to commit suicide by attempting to shoot herself and this fact created a huge scandal which was revealed in the newspapers. Some of Debussy’s friends such as Louys and the young composer Maurice Ravel took Texier’s side and raised funds for the abandoned wife. Debussy never forgave them. Despite the fact that he isolated himself from his friends, he found affection in the company of Bardac. He lived with Bardac in a house with a small garden. Although Debussy and Bardac were not married, soon their daughter was born and they gave her the name “Chou-Chou” since this is how they liked to call her. Debussy and Bardac never married. Once more, Debussy was faced with major economic problems and he started borrowing money from moneylenders.

In 1905, Debussy visited Eastbourne a place situated on the Channel coast of England. From his letters becomes clear that Debussy loved that place which created him feelings of joy. As he admitted, Eastbourne was a beautiful place that enable him to relax and work. There, Debussy managed to finish one of his most important works: the symphonic poem “*La Mer*” (The sea). Debussy had an enormous love about the sea and this fact prompted him to compose the three movements of the famous work “*La mer*”. Among his piano works that he finished during his stay at

Eastbourne, is a set of three images for piano. The titles were “Reflets dans l’eau” (Reflections in water), *Hommage à Rameau* (Homage to Rameau) - which was a piece dedicated to the composer of the baroque era-, and “movement”. Regarding these particular pieces, Debussy commented in a letter that he sent to his publisher that they are really good works and that they will replace either Schumann’s right or Chopin’s left in the piano literature. Two years later, he composed another three pieces of his second set of images entitled as *Cloches à travers les feuilles* (Bells Through leaves), *Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut* (And the moon Descends on the Temple which was) and *Poisson d’or* (Goldfish). Through these pieces, it is revealed that Debussy had received various sources of inspirations and influences. Between 1906-1908, he composed pieces for his daughter. It is a set of six pieces called Children’s corner. Some of the titles that were given to the six pieces were “Jimbo’s Lullaby”, “Serenade for the Doll” and “The little shepherd”. The latter one is a piece that Debussy composed influenced by Wagner’s opera *Tristan* in which a shepherd’s pipe opens the last act. The last piece of the set entitled as “Golliwog’s Cake-Walk” is based on American rhythm, ragtime which Debussy heard in Montmartre’s music halls.

In 1907, Debussy decided to go on a tour around Europe and give some concerts performing his own work. Meanwhile, Bardac was ill and she blamed him for being away. However, this kind of blame was due to her jealousy towards Debussy who was considered to be an attractive man. Debussy and Bardac got married in 1908, but around 1910 their marriage faced a vast crisis possibly because Debussy was in love with another woman. Despite this fact, his life as a composer was essentially successful. The Paris conservatoire appointed him a member of its advisory board. Moreover, he undertook the role of critic regarding various competitions and prizes. In 1910 he composed two clarinet pieces for the conservatoire’s annual examination as well as his first rhapsody. In addition, at that time, Debussy went on a conducting tour to Vienna and Budapest. While he was away, he missed his daughter and thus he wanted to send her letters. One Hungarian journalist who interviewed Debussy, found him an interesting, attractive and friendly person highlighting that he had a deep and gentle voice. He stated that “Sometimes he looks like a satisfied faun, sometimes like a naïve child”. One year later, he had an offer from a dancer of the ballet “Khamma” which was for an exotic “Egyptian” ballet. However, Debussy was not interested and thus he rejected the offer. At the same time the poet and playwright Gabriele d’Annunzio asked him to write music for a play based on the martyrdom of St. Sebastien. That play became a scandal for the Catholics since it is a mixture of sex and religion. Despite this fact, Debussy himself assumed that his music was “quite suitable for a church”.

Debussy’s mental health was negatively affected since he had cancer. He soon began to take various drugs to relieve the pain. At the same time, Debussy managed to compose his very famous preludes for piano despite his health problems. Some of these pieces are considered to be difficult due to the extremely virtuosity that they reveal. In the year 1914, Debussy felt isolated. Worried about the evolution of the French music, in 1910, he wrote that in France there was a huge influence received from German music and that the Wagner’s ideas had a negative influence on several kinds of music and countries. The same year, he managed to finish two sets of songs. In 1914, the first world war outbreak. As Debussy stated through his letters towards his publisher, the military mentality did not suit to him at all. During war, he created

Berceuse heroique for piano which is a piece of French art. In one of his letter he argued that “French art needs to take its revenge quite as much as the French army does”. Having studies of eighteenth-century French music, before the time when German ideals took over swamped France’s native culture, he let out the harmonies of his own impressionist period and his music was based on the “profound grace” of the old harpsichordists. In the summer of 1915, Debussy and Bardac spent the summer at Pourville, on the Channel coast. There, he worked feverishly in “secret homage” to the young men of France, mown down in their thousands on the battlefields. Debussy being very inspired from the music of Chopin he composed two sets of brilliant studies, each of which develops a particular point of technique. They are regarded as interesting and beautiful piano pieces of the literature of piano. These pieces are extremely difficult, since every single piece has its own character. Furthermore, he composed three equally “abstract” pieces for two pianos, called-appropriately-En blanc et noir (In white and Black), one of which is dedicated to a friend who had been killed in action. Moreover, there was in his project to compos a set of sonatas-his first important chamber music since the String Quartet of twenty years earlier. By the autumn, he had completed two “in the old, flexible style”. He wrote one Cello Sonata in which a little use of the cello’s singing tone takes place. It is actually a quirky, nervous dialogue which Debussy called “Pierrot fache avec la lune” (Pierrot Angry With the Moon). In his Sonata for flute, viola and Harp he used more texture.

Debussy, when he returned to Paris, he had his first operation of his fast-growing cancer. Although the operation went relatively well, Debussy was in great pain. He had on his project a great opera to create “La chute de la maison Usher (The Fall of the House of Usher)which had haunted him for nearly ten years but he managed to complete one more piece of it, the third of his planned set of six sonatas. He played the piano at the first performance of the Violin Sonata in Paris during the summer of May 1917. This was his last public appearance. In early 1918, the last great German offensive began and by the end of March the city of Paris was pounded by enemy bombs and artillery. Debussy was in a very weak situation. On the evening of March 25, his daughter Chou Chou found her father asleep, breathing gently. Until ten o’clock in the evening, Debussy, ”quietly, like an angel he went to sleep for ever...”, as Chou Chou stated later on to her half-brother. Chou Chou, not long after Debussy’s death, she died of diphtheria at the age of thirteen. Debussy was only fifty-five when he died. He never managed to finish his set of sonatas but the three that were published have included a simple inscription, a fact that it was considered to be Debussy’s great achievement - “Claude Debussy: French musician”.



Chapter 4: CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS WORKS:

Debussy composed famous pieces for orchestra, piano pieces, songs and one opera. Some of his early works-songs are for example the poems of Theodore de Banville that he composed when he was in conservatoire. Furthermore, he composed “L’enfante prodigue” , “Damoiselle elue” which was an early cantata which he later on re-orchestrated and it is considered one of his masterpieces. It was written for choral. Fantasy for piano and orchestra also was an interesting piece that Debussy composed despite the fact that it did not gain the appropriate success. Trio in G major was another early work of Debussy. Moreover, “Danse Bohemienne” is a small piece that he composed in the early period. What follows are piano works like Children’s corner, Suite Bergamasque and Preludes. At the beginning of his career, Debussy, as a composer Debussy had a very specific style of composing and he was extremely influenced by Wagner as well as by Russian composers like Borodin or Rimsky-Korsakov. For example the song Paysage sentimental written in 1880, “La belle au bois dormant and Le Triomphe de Bacchus written between 1880 and 1883 reveal the strong Russian influence he had.

Debussy’s Preludes seem to be among his most important pieces for piano and his most well-known as well. In these pieces, he managed to compose many famous pieces, with some of them being difficult to perform. It is a common fact that Debussy had the talent and the imagination to describe in a very beautiful way the nature through his work . In several of his pieces in the cycle “Preludes” he intended to show the way an “Ondine” - a mythical being that has the appearance of a mermaid-, used

to sing, so she could attract people. Some of the titles of these preludes that Debussy composed are “What the west wind saw”, “More slow than lent”, “pafumes and sounds of the night”, “The cathedrale engloutie”, “Danse of Delphes”, “The danse of Puck” and “Sails”. Among his most famous works for orchestra are regarded to be “Prelude of the afternoon of the Faun,” “Nocturnes”, “La Mer” and “Images”.

Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun: One of the main works of Debussy which gained great recognition, is the orchestral work called Afternoon Faun. Debussy, after an inspiration that he experienced, composed this piece which was actually a poem by Mallarme. This great work of the composer describes a Faun who desires and dreams in the heat of the afternoon. Half man and half goat, this faun sits in the sunshine playing a flute surrounded by beautiful nymphs.

About his composition Debussy wrote:

The music of this prelude is a very free illustration of Mallarmé's beautiful poem. By no means does it claim to be a synthesis of it. Rather there is a succession of scenes through which pass the desires and dreams of the [faun](#) in the heat of the afternoon. Then, tired of pursuing the timorous flight of [nymphs](#) and [naiads](#), he succumbs to intoxicating sleep, in which he can finally realize his dreams of possession in universal Nature(Book-Debussy by Edward Lockspeiser)

Nocturnes: One of the major orchestral works that Debussy composed is “Nocturnes”. This work has three movements. The first one is called “Nuages” which means clouds. The second movement has the title “Fetes” which means festivals and it is a lovely festive. In this movement it seems that Debussy was inspired from some southern landscape by Renoir. It perfectly describes a great scene in the wood where the joy and fun are present in that piece. The third movement is entitled as “sirens”(sirens). In this movement, Debussy used a female choir as well. The choir is meant to be just like instruments (horns). “Sirens” brings on mind the great water-color work of the painter Turner who Debussy admired. This last movement gives the impression of a mysterious event, of the sea and the sirens who are laughing or singing in a very pure and lovely way in the moonlight.

Another immense work that Debussy composed was the three symphonic sketches called “La mer” (The sea). It was completed in 1905. It is one of the most well-known works of the composer. It has three movements. The first one is called “From the dawn to the midday on the sea”, the second one is entitled as “Play of the waves” and the third one is called “Dialogue of the wind and the sea”. Here Debussy showed an incredible talent since he had to compose such a fantastic symphonic work for orchestra in which the nature is narrated amazingly. This work seeks above all to convey the incredible energy of the ocean's rhythmical movements with a magisterial handling of the forces at the composer's disposals. It is one of the most amazing instrumental works of the composer which gave him a great success. The cover of this work was taken from a beautiful painting of the Japanese painter K. Hokusai “The great wave off Kanagawa”. It was used in the first edition of “The sea”. This work is considered as one of the greatest French symphonic compositions. In a letter that Mallarme wrote to Debussy, it seems that the poet was pleased with the performance of Debussy's masterwork. As Mallarme argued “the illustration of the après-midi d'un

faune represents no dissonance with my text, but really rather exceeds it in longing and light with its finesse, its melancholy, its richness” (Book-Debussy by Edward Lockspeiser).

Another well known work of Debussy is the “images” for orchestra. This work has three movements. The first one has the name “Gigues”. In that piece Debussy used many folks elements from England. He was inspired from the song “Dansons la gigue” by Charles Bordes the Scottish folk tune “The keel Row”. The second part of this work entitled as “Iberia” which is actually the most famous of the three movements. In that case, Debussy composed three parts regarding that movement.

The three sections of Iberia are:

1. In the street and by-ways
2. The fragrances of the night
3. Round dances on spring

This music of “Iberia” is full of notions from Spain. Inspired by the streets and by-ways the audience can listen to the castanets and tambourine in alternation with strings plucked in modally inflected consecutive fifths. The second movement “The fragrances of the night” presents an exciting and imaginary scene of an attractive garden through various beautiful sounds. The third part of “images” called “Round dances on spring” is about a folk song titled “Noun n’irons plus au bois”. This piece is full of colors. In this case, Debussy avoided to focus on a single instrument just like he did with Gigues but adding as well an orchestration tone-color. The composer himself said that in that work he wanted to achieve to compose something that will be realistic.

Another work that Debussy composed is the great orchestral work called “Jeux”(Games). It has the meaning of games and even though it did not gain the expected success the day that it was performed, it is regarded as one of the best compositions that Debussy composed for orchestra. As he himself stated to the French newspaper Le matin through one of his letters, **“There is a park, a tennis court; there is a chance meeting of two girls and a young man seeking a lost ball; a nocturnal landscape, and a suggestion of something sinister in the darkening shadows”**. Games are presented to that piece involving quarrels, jealousy, reconciliation and night falls on the empty park. Apart from this, “Jeux” is a mysterious piece with a kind of sentiment. In addition to these, Debussy wrote various beautiful and well known vocal compositions. Some of them are Nuit d’etoiles, Beau Soir and Fleur des bles. The most famous of the three is “Beau Soir”. It is a soft and lovely song with a pretty melody.

Another song of Debussy is “Paysage sentimental” in which the listener can recognize the influence by Borodin. In some other songs, there are passages which remind the lyrical air by Massenet and Gounod as well as by Verlaine Feter. An interesting example which reveals this fact is the songs on text by Fetes entitled as “Pantomime, fantoches and Mandoline”. The song Mandoline reminds one of the serenade of Mephistopheles in Berlioz’s Damnation de Faust. Additionally, the song Fantoches has elements which remind the music of Berlioz.

Apart from this, the influence that he received from Wagner is present in Debussy’s song just like Leitmotiv.

Some other of his well known songs derive from the set *Ariettes oubliées* again from *Fêtes Galantes*, from *Proses Lyrique*, *Chansons de Bilitis*, Songs on poems of Mallarmé and Charles d'Orléans and *Ballades de Villon*. In some of his songs, the great influence that he received from Wagner's music is obvious. Moreover, in some other, there is a pure music of Debussy like in *Chansons de Bilitis* which are considered as some of the most beautiful pieces he wrote. Few of Debussy's most famous songs are "Green" from *Ariettes oubliées*, "Il Pleure dans mon Cœur" from the same set and "Clair de Lune" from the set *Fêtes*. His piece "Beau soir" is one of the most beautiful and famous he composed. This is actually a poem by Paul Bourget. One of the most interesting and exciting works of Debussy, was his famous opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*. From 1892 until 1902 this project occupied Debussy. This opera has its setting in the Kingdom of Allemande during the Middle Ages. Debussy was fond of poetry and he wanted to show the passion of a story in that opera. To be more specific, the story takes place in the mythical land of Allemande, Golaud, where a widower grandson of King Arkel, has lost his way while hunting. By a fountain he discovered a frightened girl, Mélisande who was lost as well. Due to the fact that the night was falling, she reluctantly consented to follow him. Golaud took Mélisande to his castle and married her. However, Mélisande felt in love with Golaud's younger brother Pelléas. Pelléas decided to leave the castle but he asked to meet Mélisande one last time. When they met each other, Pelléas heard a noise, which he recognized as the shutting of the castle gates. At the end the lovers were trapped, and Golaud appeared in the gloom. As he drew his sword, the lovers desperately embraced. Pelléas was killed, and Mélisande ran away into the forest. It is an opera with an immense passion something that Debussy added to this great opera with his music. It is a dramatic work and it is about love. It was first performed in Paris in 1902.

Some of the most interesting compositions of Debussy was also the sonata for violin and piano in g minor. This sonata has three movements. The first one is *Allegro vivo*, the second is *intermezzo: Fantasque et léger*, and the third *finale: Très animé*.

Debussy, as it is already mentioned, composed the work *fantasy for piano and orchestra* which is not so famous but it is known as the only work that Debussy composed for piano and orchestra. In this *fantasy* Debussy wrote three movements and this work was actually one of his early works. Debussy's influence by Faure and Franck is obvious. It is a work that has three movements. The first one is in *Andante-Allegro* in G major, the second movement is a lyric piece "*lento e molto espressivo*" in F-sharp and the third is "*Allegro molto*" in G major. For piano Debussy wrote the very famous suite "*Children's corner*". His daughter Chou-Chou inspired him to write some of the most beautiful and well known compositions. It is a collection of six pieces.

1. Doctor gradus ad Parnassus
2. Jimbo's Lullaby
3. Serenade of the doll
4. The snow is dancing
5. The little shepherd
6. Golliwog's Cakewalk

This work was published in 1908.

Among his piano works are the two "*Arabesques*" which are widely known pieces and the listener can detect in the first one the influence that Debussy had from exotic

music. The second one is a very joyful and pleasant piece, with a beautiful melody and rhythm. Preludes are also among his most famous works for piano. “What the west wind saw”, “fireworks“, “the steps in the snow“, “colors and perfumes of the night” are some of the successful Preludes that Debussy composed. One of the Preludes which is very intense and impressive is the “What the west wind saw”.

The harmony in this Prelude is very interesting and it is a piece that depicts Debussy’s style under which he composed music. It is very fast and furious piece and thus extremely difficult to be played. The pedal should be used quite a lot in order to create a big, dynamic and enormous sound. This is definitely one of the main and most important Preludes that Debussy wrote. The cycle of the work “Images” which Debussy wrote for orchestra were written for piano. Debussy composed some pieces which have nothing to do with the “Images” for orchestra since they are totally different. However, Debussy’s inspiration and huge talent were revealed through his work since he managed to express all his imagination and love about music and nature composing extraordinary pieces in the cycle of “Images” for piano. In addition, he edited two books namely “Images 1” and “Images 2”. In these pieces Debussy used pentatonic scale at a great extent. He liked to play with the intervals as he wanted to create a unique sound and atmosphere.

Nevertheless, his piece “Bells through the leaves” is a soft, peacefully and elegant yet meditative piece with the sound of the bells to be sounded as they are moving through the leaves. For piano literature Debussy’s twelve etudes are seemed to be of great importance and very interesting for pianists. This work has many technical difficulties and thus constitutes a challenge. Some of the titles are “For thirds”, “For octaves”, “For five fingers” and “For the accords”.



Chapter 5: ORCHESTRAL WORKS- BRIEF ANALYSE

The Afternoon of a Faun: This orchestral work of Debussy was his first impressionistic work for orchestra and the one that gave him his first success. This work starts with an oboe in 6/8 tact and slowly “crescendo” or “decrescendo” enters. After a while, the tact becomes $\frac{3}{4}$ and a solo from oboe enters. Main theme appears in woodwinds with the replacement of other voices. The dynamic comes down and a part of the theme can be heard “pp” in French horn. At the end, the flute plays the coda while harp and cymbalo play their own melody. It is considered as one of the most important works for orchestra of the 20th century. It provides a sense of imagination and it is a dreamy piece in which the composer used all his imagination. This piece was first played in 22 of December 1894 in Paris under the conduction of Gustave Doret.

Cast: 3 fl(3=Pic), 2 Ob, 2 Cl, 2 Fag- 4 Cor, Cimb 2 Ar-Archi

Duration: 9 minutes

Nocturnes: In the period of 1897- 1899, Debussy composed three nocturnes for orchestra: Nuages, Fetes and Sirenes. In this case, the idea came from the American painter James Whistler. The first part of the three nocturnes - “Nuages” - describes the clouds in the sky. The main theme can be detected due to the clarinets and bassoons. Valls stated that “every note” of this theme is taken from a song of Mussorgsky arguing that “The noisy day has sped its flight”. If Vall was correct regarding the theme then this piece turns to have a totally different character. Through this piece, flutes and horns, violin and viola solos as well as cellos and drum roll can be detected. The second movement Fetes is a cheerful piece, a fact that reveals Debussy’s fascination for some southern landscape by Renoir and hence his source of inspiration. Its the tempo is “animate and very rhythmic” and it is actually a fast dance. Trumpets, trombones and cymbals, flues and woodwind and strings are present. The last movement “Sirenes” has his female choir. These voices are actually the main instruments of the piece. It is an esthetic movement with the sense of the sirens singing. This work is similar to a work by Turner which is concerned with water and color. It was first performed in 1901.

Cast: 3 fl. 2 Ob, Cor 1, 2 Cl. 3 Fag- 4 Cor, 3 Tr. 3 Tromb, Tb. Timp, Bi- 2 Archi, women choir.

Duration: 25 minutes

Opera-Pelleas and Melisande: One of the most important and interesting operas of the 20th century is the opera Pelleas and Melisande. Debussy loved the French operas of the 19th century as well as the operas of Wagner. This entire opera is like one declaiming recitative. He used a lot of libretto. It is a dramatic story by Maeterlinck. Debussy had a great inspiration when he was writing this piece of music. When he first attended the performance at the Theatre of Bouffes-Parisiens, Debussy was so delighted that he decided to take this text and adjust it for an opera. He was working on it over a period of ten years between the ages of thirty and forty. The first performance of this opera took place in 2.3.1910 in Paris. The opera begins with a simple motive of 2 tacts being the introduction while it ends with two motives: the one of Melisande in sixteen and the other of Golauduv which is under it. Pelleas has the simple lyrical motive with the syncope accompaniment. Debussy wrote the lyrics of the duet of love so as to be performed without the orchestra. This fact add a mystery to it. The entire opera has to do with declamation with relatively thin interval

variations. It is regarded as one of the most impressive operas of the 20th century.

La Mer: One of the most famous and important works of Debussy was the symphonic work “La Mer” which was completed in 1905. In this piece Debussy used three flutes, two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two harps, two crotales and strings. This work starts with the flute whose sounds aim to give a soft melody which is found in modern music. Through it, he provided a magnificent scene of nature in which the colors, the mystery and the suspense are present through beautiful melodies and improvisation. The first part of the work “from the dawn to the midday on the sea” starts with pp in violoncello.

A main motive played by the English horn with heavily played tubes. In the following bars the midday is coming. The sixteen figurations shows the murmur of the sea in which enters the sord. Then, the English horn enters once again while right after a clear gradient in a new oboe melody is heard. After a while, it seems that the rhythm is getting more and more complicate. The waves are alive and the heat of the sun is more intense. Tremolo and triplets appear in some of the instruments. The second half of the piece, starts with the violoncello. English horn and tubing with sord followed and due to this fact, it seems that the piece is in a rhythmical development and somehow the English horn gives a great celebrating melody of the the sea. At the end of the piece, a fortissimo enter which is played by the whole orchestra.

Debussy’s first movement analyzed by its key signatures ,the 4 sections are evident:

bars 1-30 (2 sharps) act as an introduction

bars 31-83 (5 flats) are a first section ♣

bars 84-121 (2 flats) are a second section ♣

bars 122 to the end at 141 (5 flats again) are a short final section or coda

This first movement contains strange passages. The orchestration is rich with a soft sound of the string while the various winds are used in a very dynamic way. In addition, the harp is used in “La Mer” which gives a delicacy and shine in the whole piece. La Mer can be characterised as one of the most modern orchestral works. Debussy avoided the traditional form when writing a work for orchestra and he rather applied a free form using harmonic devices such as triads floats in parallel movements in order to manage a colorful atmosphere. The second part has some small motive in a raw. In this movement a significant role plays the English horn and the oboe. The rhythm has the character of triplets played by violins. Moreover, glissando of harp, flutes and clarinets develop a background for the singing motive of the French horn. Another development of that piece is where the triplets or the 32 figures become complicated and so there the outcome is an impressionism sound. The tempo starts to be quicker and another motive of the violins start to give a dynamic sound which at the end comes to pp in the flutes and octaves of harp together with solo violin.

The third movement which has to do with the issue of storms and the sea, starts with the cello which gives the impression of the mists as well as with the double bass that provides several small motives with rhythmical combination of oboes and clarinets. Tremolo of the strings prepares the entrance of the main melody of trumpet. Oboe gives the contrasts of the melody in which there are small intervals while span induces

inner restlessness. After the entrance of trombone and the pianissimo of cornet there is a shine of French horns with the celebration of the sea to be given in combination of the flutes and oboes. This combination creates one of the most interesting and most incredible sounds of the whole impressionist music. This magnificent work had been premiered in 15.10.1905 in Paris under the conduction of Camille Chevillard and in 19.1.1908 as well but with a minor success. However, Artur Toscan presented it later on and this work became worldwide famous gaining the right to be considered as one of the best works written for orchestra.

Cast: 2 Fl(2=Pic), 2 Ob(2= Cor i), 2 Cl. In B. 3 Fag(3=Cfg)-4 Cor, 5 Tr(Cornet), 3 Tromb, Tb-Timp, Bi, 2 Ar. Cel. Archi.

Duration: 25 minutes

Games: In the year 1913, Debussy had an invitation from S. Diaghilev to provide his music - a libretto - to a ballet whose leader dancer was Vaclav Nijinsky, who nevertheless danced Debussy's *The Afternoon of the Faun* in 1912. Nijinsky himself wanted this work to be a libretto. As a consequence, Debussy composed one work for orchestra which is by itself a symphonic poem. With the deep modern harmony and other harmonic means, Debussy's work shows an impressionistic idea and a huge piece with dissonances tones and all tones scales as well as second intervals, polytonality and various elements making it in this way very attractive.

The piece's story deals with a sport. To be more precise, it refers to young people - one boy and two girls - who play tennis in a park. While they are playing, they suddenly lose the ball and thus they start searching for it. What it follows is an emotional attraction between the young people. The boy kisses one of the girls and the other gets jealous and starts to dance to him forcing in this way the first girl to leave. This story ends with the three young people joining together. Nijinsky, who was a great dancer and choreographer from Russia, suggested that this is a scenario about tennis game and a crashing airplane. However, Debussy himself rejected this suggestion and he argued that this is a story about a love triangle in a tennis court. The work was first performed in 15.5.1913 in Paris by Ballets Russes with no success. The work has repeating themes, clear tonal centers and simple functional harmonies. It reminds of an opera of A. Schoenberg "*Erwartung*", which is an atonal work. On the other hand, Debussy used some techniques he had already used in his opera "*Pelleas and Melisande*". For example, he applied in both works a technique that has to do with diatonic pitches which are used so as to form a nice single chord. Apart from this, there are moments of bitonality and also moments of near atonalities. In addition, he used modal, pentatonic, major and minor tonalities.

Chapter 6: MUSIC FOR PIANO - ANALYSIS

The famous preludes: Regarding the piano music of Debussy, the preludes he composed between the time of 1907-1913 are among the most beautiful and famous piano pieces in the history of piano composition. There are 24 preludes and he published two books. These pieces were written during a period that the composer had great inspirations. Debussy himself wrote at the end of the page of every single piece its title. This is due to the fact that he wanted first to express the music and later on to add the words. Debussy was influenced by some books that he read and by some music from the romantic composers such as Brahms, Wagner, Stravinsky and other Russian composers. These pieces are recognizable for their free rhythm, based on improvisation and less on the rhythmic tact. The melodic phrases are several often independent from the accompaniment of the chords. As a great pianist, Debussy had performed in public some of the preludes he composed.

1. Danseuses de Dalphes

This piece is a prelude and Debussy was inspired by the Greek ancient history. While he was in the famous museum of Louvre, he noticed a Greek statue of three elegant ancient dancers and that prompted him to give a unique atmosphere to this short composition.

2. Voiles

One friend of Debussy called Edgar Varese, assumed that the composer inspired the title “voiles” when he saw the ripples of the transparent veils of the dancer Loie Fuller. It is also possible that Debussy was influenced by the ripples of some sailboat in 1904 during his long stay in Mach and in Eastbourne of England in 1905. Debussy used in the entire piece - from the beginning until the end - whole-tone scale.

3. Le vent dans la plaine

This piece is about the wind which Debussy may have inspired from the poem of Favart “West wind”. To this piece, he gave some low dynamics although sometimes some violent breaths appear.

4. Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l’air du soir

In one of the poems of the famous French poet Baudelaire, there is a phrase “harmony of the night” and this is what inspired Debussy to compose and give a piece full of sounds and colors as they appear during the night. It is one of the most beautiful preludes rich of harmony and very soft.

5. Les Collines d’Anacapri

The title Collines d’Anacapri was taken after an old Italian bottle of wine. The hills of Anacapri are presented in the mastery of the composer but it is interesting the fact that the piece is based on an old Neapolitan folk song.

6. Des pas sur la neige

Here Debussy describes a melancholic snowing place. It is an expressive piece, full of sadness but with seductive impressions as well.

7. Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest

In one fairytale of Hans Christian Andersen called "Heaven's gardens" Debussy "came across" the "west wind" which is what he actually describes in this piece. It is considered to be one composition with several technical difficulties.

8. La fille aux cheveux de lin

It is one of the most famous works of Debussy. It derives from the poem by Leconte de Lisle. It is one lyrical piece, worldwide known.

9. La serenade interrompue

It is one typical "Spanish" work by Debussy. The sense of a guitar playing is present while its sound reminds of Spanish rhythms and Mauritanian melodies. Hence, Debussy's influence by the Spanish sounds is evident in this piece.

10. La cathédrale engloutie

There was one old myth about one submerged temple of YS which rose from the bottom of the sea during the foggy mornings. The bells that are mentioned in the myth can be sounded in that piece as well as the chanting of the priests that is performed just before the temple comes to submerge once again.

11. La danse de Puck

La danse de Puck is a distinctive sketch from the "pipe dream" of Shakespeare.

12. Minstrels

Debussy, during his holiday in Eastbourne in 1905, was impressed by the "games" of an American group of musician travelers. Due to this, he composed this piece aiming to show something from their music, jokes, and humor.

Second book of preludes:

1. Brouillards

In the mists Debussy comes across with nature and a beautiful scenery.

2. Feuilles mortes

Dead leaves of autumn is the main character of that piece. The leaves lie down in the dust. It is a sad page of the second book of preludes, which however, expresses a kind of sensitiveness.

3. La puerta del Vino

One day, the Spanish composer Manuel de Falla, sent to Debussy a cart postal which showed the very famous entrance of the palace of Mauritania in Alhambra, Granada. The composer here depicts several Spanish elements from the rhythm of habanera creating in this way a unique and beautiful atmosphere of Spain.

4. Les fees sont d'exquises danseuses

Debussy inspired the title for this piece when he saw a typical graphical style of Arthur Rackham in the book of J.M Barrie "Peter Pan in the Garden of Kensington" which was a present sent to the composer's daughter Chou Chou by his good friend Robert Codet. It can be described as an elegant music, which it reminds a little bit of a waltz by J. Brahms.

5. Bruyeres

In this prelude the composer uses both ideas and colors. He describes a scenery of the nature with a very calm and peacefully music.

6. General Lavine-eccentric

Debussy inspired the title of this work by the famous comedian Eduard Lavine who lived in Paris. To be more precise, Lavine, who was well known for his shows regarding puppet theater, he liked to give different names to his woody dolls. One of his dolls that was in his services during his whole carrier, was named as "The General". Debussy, excited about the "wars" of the "eccentric" General decided to wrote this humoristic piece.

7. La terrasse des audience de clair de lune

Debussy had a friend "Rene Puaux" who had traveled to India. The inspiration of the title came from a letter that she wrote to Debussy through which she narrated the experiences that she had during this journey. It is a delicate piece, full of colors. In addition, it does not only appear to be a mysterious piece but also a moving one which expresses the ideas and views of Debussy.

8. Ondine

The Scandinavian mythology mentions the dancers of the water, who catch unsuspecting travelers and fishermen and take them in crystal palaces that exist in the bottom of the sea. It is a dreamy piece since the light of the moon along with the dancers create an outstanding atmosphere.

9.Hommage a Sam Pickwick Esq P.P.M.P.C

This piece is dedicated to Sam Pickwick who was a hero of Dickens. Here Debussy describes the arrogant, fun and nice smile of Dickens's hero. The English hymn "God save the king" appears at bass at the first tacts of the piece and the composer presents it in such a way so as to recall a Cantus Firmus which has "no future".

10.Canope

Debussy had in his desk a pair of valuable Egyptian ancient deadly vases. Based on this, he wrote a piece with minor chords which shows the decline of a period expressing as well the agony of the death.

11.Les tierces alternees

This is a prelude-etude, of thirds. It is a challenging and a demanding piece, through which there are some elements taken from the work "The Rite of the Spring" by I. Stravinsky which was performed for four hands in June 1912.

12.Feux d'Artifice

It is a common fact that this piece reminds of the celebrations of invasion of Bastille. Debussy, as it is revealed from this piece, was probably inspired by these events. It is an extremely difficult prelude, with various colors and "musical fireworks"

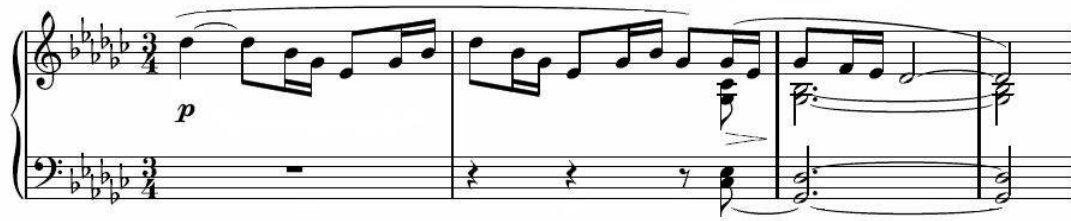
Debussy's first arabesque

This piece is a light piece of the deux arabesques which Debussy published. It is a lovely, dreamy piece as well as one of the most famous works by this composer. It is divided into three sections, more or less in ABA form. The first section-A is actually more dreamy than the other two while the B section appears to be more playful. In both sections there is a theme of arpeggios in triplets. Section A is a delicate one with soft dynamics. In section B the dynamics start to be in **forte** while later on in piano or softer dynamics. In measure 87 it is revealed that there is an expression of joy.

Prelude:Le fille aux cheveux de lin (Book 1 no8)

This prelude is placed among Debussy's most recognizable ones which constitutes as well a great examples of his distinctive musical style. In this prelude, Debussy, used here the pentatonic scales. Its main theme is found in the pentatonic scale formed by the black keys of the piano. All the notes of the theme are part of the scale except the F in the 3rd measure.

In the measures 12-14 and 19-21 other pentatonic scales are presented as well.



The harmony is extended. It is very common in Debussy's music the use of the chords of 9th, 11th, and 13th.

Measure 9, Db with 7th, 9th, and 11th: This chord has a dominant of Gb function

Measure 12, Gb with 9th, 11th

Measure 17, Ab minor with 9th and Db minor with 9th

Measure 18, Bb major with 7th, 9th, 11th: This chord has a dominant of Eb function

In measures 5 to 8, Debussy used major and minor chords to harmonise a pentatonic melody. Sometimes, traditional harmonic relations like dominant-tonic (measures 6, 2nd and 3rd beats) are found while other times they are used to give color and harmony to the melody without any use of harmonic relations. The chord that would be the Gb major dominant (measure 5, 1st beat), sounds more like a VII degree of Eb. Finally, Debussy ends the phrase with an Eb major chord.

In measure 8 and 9 there are two dominant 7th chords which are used just to give a color to the melody.

In measures 21-22 Debussy used parallel movement of chords in root position in left hand.

In measures 24 and 25 the theme appears with some variations. The chords used are formed with notes of the pentatonic scale. Note that intervals other than 3rds are used in these chords.

In measures 33-34 parallel movement of majors and minors chords in 2nd inversion appear.

Pagodes: This is a special piece by the composer through which the great influence that Debussy had from Asia is present. It comes from his book "estampes". It can be said that it is one of the most "exotic" pieces by Debussy. Here, the pentatonic scales are found. In addition, Debussy's encounter with the Japanese music is obvious in this piece revealing his fondness regarding this kind of music.



ЭСТАМПЫ ESTAMPES

Пароды КЛОД ДЕБЮССИ
Pagodes CLAUDE DEBUSSY
(1862-1918)

délicatement et presque sans nuances

Modérément animé
m.g.

I

pp m.d.

2 Ped.

4 *8* *rit. a tempo*

7 *a tempo* *8* *rit. a tempo*

10 *8* *p*

12 *2 Ped.* *p*

Structure: In this piece there are three major themes: the pentatonic scale that first appears in measure 3 and is repeated in variation throughout the piece, the melody that first appears in octaves in measure 11 and develops into the theme in the left hand at measure 37 and the melody that appears in measure 33. On the other hand, the middle melody in measure 7 reappears in measure 84 and the chords start in measure 15. These themes and motifs weave in and out in various layers over the resonant pedal point of the bass notes and chords.

Apart from this analysis of the piece, regarding the structure, it can be said that this piece has the form ABCBACD and it ends with D.



Images: Reflets dans l'eau: This piece comes from the first series of Debussy and particularly from the pieces of “images”. It is one of his most famous pieces. It is a dreamy, very delicate and soft piece.

According to Valery, this piece can be described as a unique piece of rondos, built on two recurring motives ,A and B. As he explains, what begins and ends the piece is A, which defines a rondo outline with major returns in bars 35-and 71. A return of it takes place in bar 81 which points out the beginning of the coda. On the other hand, B appears to be a more melodic development of A, beginning with A in retrograde (the minor third expanded to a major third in its first appearance). Constructed episodes are formed in the rondo scheme through the appearance of B, with principles entries bars 24,50 and 78- one in each of the sections marked by the rondo returns prior on the coda. From these three, the final one appears to be very short while the central one seems to be the most important: after its entry in bar 50, B governs the whole climactic section until bar 70 (P.Valery, cited in P. Howat - Debussy in proposition: a musical analysis).

In this piece, there are separate musical turning points, particularly important at bars 43-4, 56 and 69. This is the main reason that the description of “rondo” can be attributed to this piece. However, what is more clear about *Reflets dans l'eau* is its shape. It is dramatic and dynamic shape - as opposed to its more academic formal aspects.

In the first section, the harmony changes in bar 17 “ having been largely tonic-based up to there, to prepare of the motive B at bar 24 which then leads into the climax in bar 30” (P.Valery, cited in P. Howat, p. 29, 1986 - Debussy in proposition: a musical analysis). In a similar way, the next section starts, in bar 35, over a tonic pedal, changing in bar 43, before B enters in bar 50. After that Debussy avoids to be in the tonic key as long as possible. The piece returns to the tonic key in the bar 69 with the returns of the five flats and a dominated-ninth chord. However, the required tonic chord in bar 73 “has the ground pulled from under it by an echo of the descending run that had dominated bars 67-70. Not until bar 77 is the tonic triad held steady which is added by sixths, sevenths and ninths“(P.Valery, cited in P. Howat, p. 29, 1986 - Debussy in proposition: a musical analysis).

This can be called an abstract piece while it can be described as an “example of impressionistic music”; it is a magnificent piece as well as a distinctive one of Debussy’s work. His talent is revealed by managing to bring this piece to high levels of beauty, elegance using difficult techniques.

D'un Cahier d'Esquisses

The composition is in tempo Tres lent/very slow/, 5flats , 6/8. The first two lines and one bar comprise the introduction.

There are two motives which build up the entire piece. In line 3/page1/ begins the part A-au Mouv't; in page 2, second bar -part B- En animant peu peu - the accompaniment is ostinato on the b flat minor chord, also pedal ton on the b flat. In the forth line, the part A comes again but shorter. On page 3, the three part form finishes -En animant rubato -on the third line, bar 3. After that, there is a change of the key in the part ad libitum - at the end of the page. On page 4, there is the motive from the beginning in augmentation - measure 6/4- in all other pages the accompaniment is ostinato from the basic chords in D flat major and finish of the piece. Preludes from Debussy are

very useful for the impressionistic performance.

Prelude 1

The piece is in B flat major and the introduction starts from the first 5 bars.

Most piano pieces of Debussy have a similar form just like the one in the previous piece. In that prelude, a defined feature is the change of the measure 4/4 and 3/4. That short piece contains the evolution of one motive and a finish created from the same augmented motive.

Prelude 2

Tempo- Modere-without signature. The beginning includes two motives in a different register-sopran and bass. The motives are all the time alternated on the ostinato accompaniment on the B flat. On the second page - line 2 - a new motive comes which continues the evolution in the piece. On page 3 there is a change of the signature/5 flats/ - En animant - and the pedaltone is still on the B flat. In the end of page 3 the signature is changing once again. On page 4, the first motive alternates with passing passages. In the last two lines, the first motive is repeated and the preludium finishes in C major.

Prelude 7

In that composition the pedaltone is again on F sharp- that is the foundation of all pieces which are contained in 7 pages.

The tempo is Anime and the signature is 3 sharps. The piece begins with arpeggios which is the introduction that continues until the end of page 1. In the last 3 bars of page 1 enters the theme in accords with the accompaniment of tremolo up in F sharp and G/pedaltone/. On pages 2 and 3 the evolution of the theme takes place. On page 3, in the first line there is the change of signature and the measure/4/4/ but the pedaltone is still F sharp. On page 4, in the second line there is a comeback to the scale from the beginning and the measure 3/4. The theme changes the register- is playing from the left hand - the pedaltone F sharp still exist - the accompaniment is in the right hand. On page 5, in line 3 there is the climax of the form - the composer treated the theme with virtuosity.

On page 7 there is a shorter comeback of the first motive, short coda and finish.

Chapter 7: HOW TO TEACH AND PLAY DEBUSSY

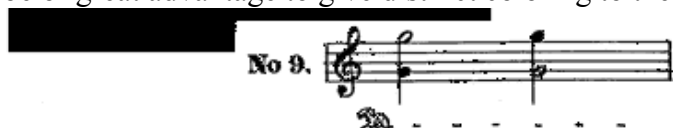
One of Debussy's statement was that: *"To impose a fingering cannot logically adapt itself to the different formations of the hand. The absence of fingerings is an excellent exercise, it suppresses the spirit of contradiction which prompts us to prefer not to use the author's fingering, and verifies these everlasting words: 'One is never better served than by one's self'."*

There are several pianists who perform Debussy's music. However, every single one performs it differently. Playing Debussy is not an easy task - and for a pianist or pedagogue it should be clear that it is a demanding and careful work, which requests appropriate fingering and excellent use of the pedal while the issue of technique plays an important role.

These facts are essential for students who are fond of Debussy's music or they are about to perform a piece of Debussy (for example an etude of Debussy which considered to be extremely difficult). It will be helpful to study some books or to take advices and information from expert teachers or pianists. In addition, one must keep in mind that the listening of some great pianists playing pieces of Debussy contributes to the better understanding of the composer's music at a great extent. This fact applies to all artists who attempt to perform Debussy's work.

The French composer Maurice Dumesnil, who was one of Debussy's student, wrote the book "How to play and teach Debussy" where he describes several interesting moments of Debussy not only as a teacher but as a musician as well. Also Maurice wrote an article namely "coaching with Debussy" in which he provides various information. One example is the description that he provides regarding the playing of the chord of C major. As he explains, one should hold down the two pedals when starts to play the chords. He/She should start with the dynamic "p" and all the notes should be sounded clearly. Extensive practice is an important issue since due to this, these chords can be heard right and clear and hence pianissimo can be played further.

In order for the various notes to be sounded together, excessive relaxation is not advisable. The fingers must have a certain firmness of rubber, with no stiffness whatsoever. According to Maurice Dumesnil, Debussy's chief instruction was: "Play with more sensitiveness in the finger tips. Play chords as if the keys were being attracted to your finger tips, and rose to your hand as to a magnet". Another essential point regarding tone coloring, deals with the playing of octaves. Generally speaking, it will be of great advantage to give distinct coloring to the two notes:

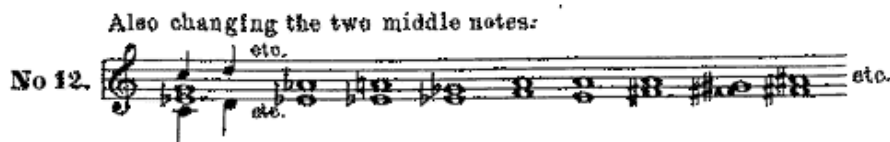
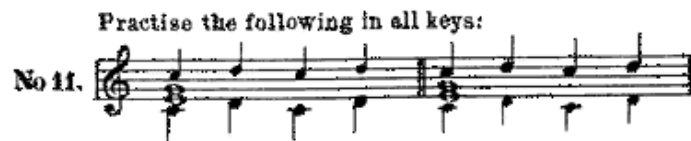


(It will be a matter of taste for the interpreter, to discover which note has to be given prominence.)

When the two hands are playing octaves together, this coloring can be more diversified:

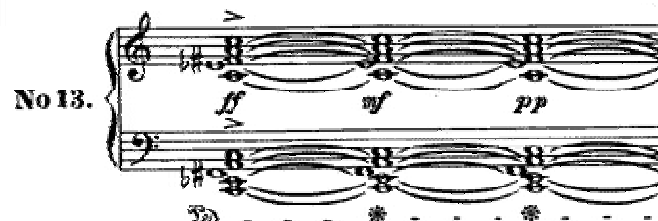


(To be practiced on both white and black keys; in the latter case, use also the 4th finger instead of the 5th.)



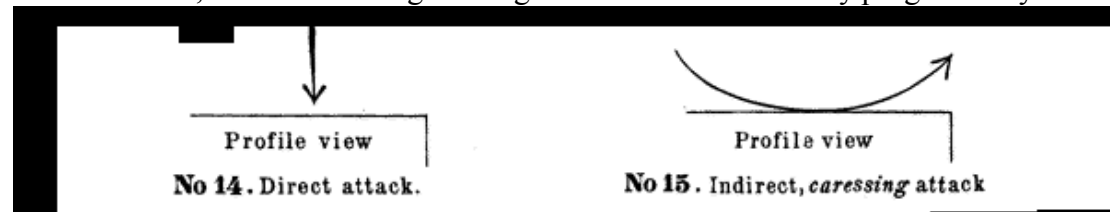
Pedal: Concerning the use of pedal in Debussy's music, many experts in the field of music argued that Debussy himself did not provide any instructions on how to use it in his pieces. Sometimes he rather did not recommend it at all. However, nowadays, different interpretation are given regarding Debussy's piano pieces as well as of other composers. For an interpreter, it is useful to be aware of several ways of using the pedal when he/she wants to perform a piece of Debussy.

In Debussy's music, various arpeggios and passages are found which must always be treated from the "sonorous," the "harmonic," and the "vibrating" standpoint; finger velocity must never be displayed. When playing them, there is a need of the frequent use of the damper pedal. Debussy insisted in the production of this "mellow, liquid tone" in such an extent that when he was performing in public, he demanded that the top of the concert grand remain closed. The damper pedal should be used as a "tone modifier" rather than treating it to sustain or suppress the tone. After striking a chord "fortissimo," with the damper pedal on, the tone should be modified twice with the use of a rapid movement of the ankle while the foot should be lifted only one fifth of an inch or so:



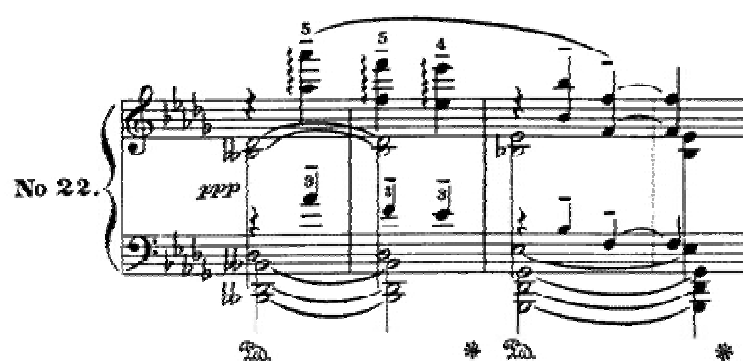
Once applying this, the dampers will come in contact with the vibrating strings in a quick and light way. As a consequence, the contact becomes insufficient for completely eliminating the vibration. The result will be a partial suppression of it. Once this is accomplished, it will establish a colorful outcome which is a striking characteristic of Debussy's music.

In order to achieve certain "pianissimo effects (on single notes principally), it is better to replace the direct attack at a right angle (as in Ex. 14). by an oblique, slanting, indirect attack, which will bring the finger in contact with the key progressively:



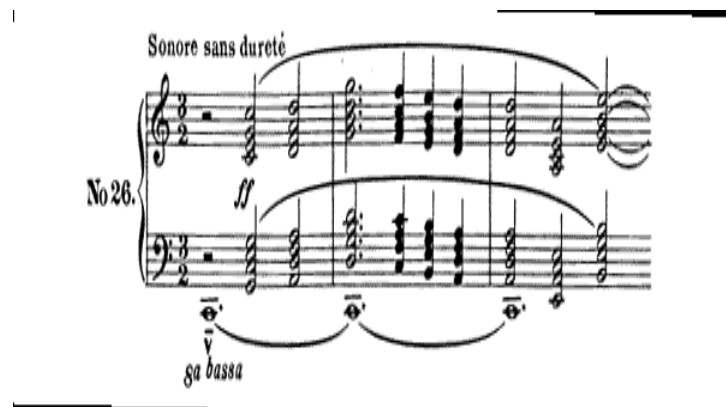
For a performer of the piece *Reflet dans l'eau* there are some great notes when he/she wants to play this piece lovely and softly. First of all, the right hand must remain very quiet and it is better to be played in "legato" - as much as possible - in order to produce something like a wave. It is actually a piece which flows slowly and in some parts it sounds quicker than other. The left hand should produce sounds like bells which are sounded very softly. The two pedals should be used all the way through. Any excess of vibration on the first beat of the second bar, will be eliminated through a slight, quick action of the damper pedal. Here, Debussy wanted the first measure to be all blurred in damper pedal (no soft pedal) whereas the second measure to be produced with the soft pedal *Jone*, just like an echo heard from afar. This piece should be performed in a very pure way and extreme sensitiveness.

This method of the piece can be used in the following pieces: *Les sons et parfums tournent dans l'air du soir*, *Cloches a travers les feuilles*, *Le Soirees dans Granade*, *Voiles*.



La Cathedral Engloutie: This piece is very profound. It should be played very carefully in order to create an atmosphere of the Cathedral Engloutie. One of Debussy's phrases "Sonorous without hardness" is actually the tempo he wrote to that piece. Therefore, the chords of this piece should be played with a considerable weight not only from the arms, but from the shoulders as well. Attacking from too high would produce a tone deficient in quality, harsh and brittle. The pedal should be used

not from the beginning of the piece but rather a little bit later, when the chords start to rise up.



Danseuses de Daphnes: The tempo of this piece is “Slow and solemn”(soft and sustained). Carefully the right hand should be sounded just like a soft, attractive melody. The middle voice is “legato” so it should be played correctly. The octaves in the left hand should be also played with a soft relaxation just like they are purely flowing. However, this effect must be achieved only through difference of attack and tone *quality*, *not* by playing the middle voice louder.



Try and give different coloring to the three singing voices, (octaves in the right hand and single notes in the left), by giving prominence: first, to the top notes of the octave, right hand; second to the bass; third, the lower note of the octave right hand (subdued).

*Source of these information are from the book “How to play and teach Debussy” by Maurice Dumesnil.

Conclusion:

Concluding, this project was concerned with the life and work of the composer Claude Debussy. In particular, this project investigated, analysed and discussed in detailed the contribution of Debussy in the realm of music. As the above discussion indicates, Debussy appears to be a composer with unique talent whose music remained untouched despite the pass of the years. Influenced by various composers and experts on the field, he created distinctive piano pieces such as Arabesques, Clair de Lune, Reverie, Ballade-Slave, pieces for four hands like En Bateau as well as pieces like his 12 etudes that defines him as a composer whose piano work is difficult to be performed.

The distinctive analysis provided regarding his orchestral work, reveal that La Mer is one of the most astonishing pieces that Debussy composed. This fact becomes obvious not only from the various critics who wrote about this particular work but also from the great orchestras in the world who perform this piece under the leading of really extraordinary and terrific conductors. Furthermore, the work The Afternoon of a Faun is considered to be one of the most important pieces in the history of music. It is defined as a piece through which one can feel the spirits of mystery and that is why it is regarded as an essential piece in the music of the 20th century. Even though several pieces of Debussy are not well-known to the public, La Mer and Afternoon of a Faun are definitely famous. Apart from his works for piano and orchestra, Debussy composed as well just one opera entitled Pelleas and Mellisande and his French songs with the accompaniment of solo instruments which defined him as an important personality of France.

Moreover, Debussy was an incredible composer with a distinct musical style, whose talent, creativity and passion towards nature and music are depicted in his works. As a consequence, his work is still influencing other composers and musicians in general.

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